



**Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks**

1400 So. 19th
Bozeman, MT 59718

June 19, 2001

TO: Governor's Office, Todd O'Hair, Room 204, State Capitol, P.O.200801, Helena, MT 59620-0801
Environmental Quality Council, Capitol Building, Room 106, P.O Box 201704, Helena, MT 59620
Dept. Environmental Quality, Metcalf Building, P.O. Box 200901, Helena, MT 59620-0901
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Director's Office

Fisheries Division

Parks Division

Wildlife Division

Legal Unit

Dennis Flath

FWP Commissioners

MT Historical Society, State Historic Preservation Office, POB 201202 Helena, MT 59620-1202

MT State Parks Association, P.O. Box 699, Billings, MT 59103

MT State Library, 1515 E. Sixth Ave., POB 201800, Helena, MT 59620

James Jensen, Montana Environmental Information Center, POB 1184, Helena, MT 59624

Janet Ellis, Montana Audubon Council, POB 595, Helena, MT 59624

George Ochenski, POB 689, Helena, MT 59624

Gallatin County Commissioners, Gallatin County Courthouse, 311 West Main, Bozeman, MT 59715

Jerry DiMarco, P.O. Box 1571, Bozeman, MT 59771

Wildlife Federation, P.O. Box 1175, Helena, MT 59624

Wayne Hurst, P.O. Box 728, Libby, MT 59923

Glen Hockett, 745 Doane Road, Bozeman, MT 59715

Skyline Sportsman's Assoc., Box 173, Butte, MT 59701

Anaconda Sportsman's Club, #2 Cherry, Anaconda, MT 59711

Jefferson Valley Sportsman's Assoc., P.O. Box 663, Whitehall, MT 59759

Prickly Pear Sportsman's Assoc., 1721 Virginia Dale St., Helena, MT 59601

Jack Atcheson, State Land Coalition, 3210 Ottawa St., Butte, MT 59701

Tom Sather, Headwaters Fish & Game Association, P.O. Box 1941, Bozeman, MT 59771-1941

Perry Backus, 65 Redtail, Dillon, MT 59725

Ladies and Gentlemen:

FWP is planning to relocate **Canada geese** that are found on ponds on and near the East Gallatin Recreation Area. These birds are causing problems with excrement accumulation and vegetation damage. The birds will be captured and moved while they are in their flightless (molting) condition and moved to the **Canyon Ferry Waterfowl Management Area** near Townsend.

The enclosed checklist EA discloses the environmental and social impacts of this proposal. The EA will be out for public review from June 19 until July 3, 2001. Comments can be mailed to Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Geese Transplant, 1400 So. 19th Bozeman, MT 59718 or e-mail: kalt@montana.edu

Sincerely,

Patrick J. Flowers
Regional Supervisor

Broadwater + Gallatin

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS**

1400 South 19th Avenue; Bozeman, MT 59718
994-4042

Project Title Transplanting Flightless Canada Geese from Gallatin County to Canyon Ferry Wildlife Management Area, Broadwater County

Division/Bureau Wildlife Division

Program Wildlife

Description of Project: Due to increases in numbers of breeding Canada geese in Gallatin County in recent years, concentrations of geese during the summer months have resulted in complaints from landowners and land managers. In the Bozeman area in particular, summer flocks as large as 75 geese have been seen on individual wetlands for periods of several months. Most recently, complaints have been received by Fish, Wildlife & Parks from recreationists at the East Gallatin Recreation Area (EGRA) on Bozeman's north side and from a large real-estate/homesite development area just to the west and north of the EGRA. These complaints have focused on goose excrement accumulating on lawn and beach areas and also goose grazing and damage to grass and other vegetation on these sites. Because the area is recreational and residential, it doesn't lend itself to traditional methods of controlling these problems including using a variety of noise-making devices, fencing beaches to exclude the geese, and other techniques. Since using dogs or people to haze the geese from the affected areas during the summer is a time intensive and therefore expensive endeavor, FWP proposes to trap and transplant approximately 100 flightless geese from the area (which includes the EGRA and adjacent ponds) in July, 2001 and immediately transport them via ground transportation to Canyon Ferry Wildlife Management Area near Townsend, a distance of approximately 65 miles. This site is being proposed because it is public land where there already is a large goose population. In addition, it has an active fall hunting program whereas the Bozeman area with its growing rural population, is becoming increasingly less conducive to hunting of geese. Hunting of these geese is believed necessary to help control their numbers. Once these geese migrate from Canyon Ferry to points south, they are expected to move into the same migration corridor used by geese, which constitute the fall flight from the Bozeman area.

POTENTIAL IMPACT ON PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

	MAJOR	MODERATE	MINOR	NONE	UNKNOWN	COMMENTS ON ATTACHED PAGES
1. Terrestrial & aquatic life and habitats			X			
2. Water quality, quantity & distribution			X			
3. Geology & soil quality, stability & moisture				X		
4. Vegetation cover, quantity & quality		X				
5. Aesthetics		X				
6. Air quality				X		
7. Unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources				X		
8. Demands on environmental resources of land, water, air & energy			X			
9. Historical & archaeological sites				X		

1. Although there will be a one-day disturbance to terrestrial and aquatic life due to the capture operations, disturbances will not have effects beyond the capture operations. The geese that will be moved will be released in habitat similar but superior to where they were trapped.
2. There may be a one-day disturbance in water quality. Turbidity may be elevated due to activity such as a boat and paddles and placing of nets, but will immediately return to normal after the activity.
4. Improvement in vegetation on areas where geese are removed.
5. Reduction in the amount of goose feces on beaches and lawns.
8. There may be a minor use in gasoline during the trapping operations, but those are completely within the realm of normal operations for FWP.

POTENTIAL IMPACTS ON HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

	MAJOR	MODERATE	MINOR	NONE	UNKNOWN	COMMENTS ON ATTACHED PAGES
1. Social structures & mores				X		
2. Cultural uniqueness & diversity				X		
3. Local & state tax base & tax revenue				X		
4. Agricultural or industrial production			X			
5. Human health			X			
6. Quantity & distribution of community & personal income				X		
7. Access to & quality of recreational and wilderness activities			X			
8. Quantity & distribution of employment				X		
9. Distribution & density of population & housing				X		
10. Demands for government services			X			
11. Industrial & commercial activity				X		
12. Demands for energy				X		
13. Locally adopted environmental plans & goals				X		
14. Transportation networks & traffic flows				X		

4. The geese will be released on the Canyon Ferry WMA, into an existing waterfowl area. These geese may use adjacent cropland adjacent to the WMA later in the fall, provided they don't migrate earlier.
5. Removing the geese from the recreation area will decrease human health concerns associated with excessive goose feces on beaches used by kids and adults.
7. Recreational experiences will be enhanced due to the removal of geese and the feces they eventually leave.
10. Demands for governmental services in trapping and moving geese will increase, temporarily. But is well within the operating realm of FWP.

Other groups or agencies contacted or which may have overlapping jurisdiction.

Ron Dingman City of Bozeman, Parks and Recreation Department

Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required (YES/NO)? If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action?

No, an EIS is not required under the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) because the project lacks significant effects to the physical and human environment. Therefore, the impacts are appropriately addressed through an Environmental Assessment.

Describe level of public involvement for this project if any and, given the complexity and the seriousness of the environmental issues associated with the proposed action, is the level of public involvement appropriate under the circumstances?

A legal notice will be placed in the surrounding newspapers and on the Fish, Wildlife & Parks Web Page. An EA can be obtained from the Fish, Wildlife & Parks, 1400 So. 19th, Bozeman.

Duration of comment period, if any.

Comments will be solicited for at least 15 days beginning June 19, 2001 until 5:00 p.m. July 3, 2001. Comments can be mailed to Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Geese Transplant, 1400 So. 19th, Bozeman, MT 59718 or e-mail: kalt@montana.edu

Individuals or groups contributing to this EA:

EA prepared by: Tom Hinz, Statewide Migratory Bird/Wetland Coordinator; Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks; 1420 East 6th Ave., Helena, MT 59620; and Kurt Alt, Wildlife Biologist; Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks; 1400 South 19th Avenue; Bozeman, MT 59718